



Henry VIII's Divorce: Literature and the Politics of the Printing Press

J. Christopher Warner

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During the period of Henry VIII's divorce crisis, a political and literary rivalry developed between Thomas Berthelet, the king's printer, and the Rastell family, kinsmen of the Lord Chancellor Sir Thomas More and quasi-official printers in their own right. This study recounts the text-by-text progress of the feud. It describes how Berthelet represented Henry as a prudent philosopher-king, taking the advice of scholars and theologians on annulling his marriage, and on limiting the Church's power (texts include *A Glass of the Truth*, rumoured to be by Henry himself, and the works of Sir Thomas Elyot). In response to the king's press campaign, the Rastells' dialogues and dramas staged the kind of wise counsel that Henry ostensibly welcomed (John Rastell's *A New Book of Purgatory*, Skelton's *Magnificence* among them), observing the rules dictated by the king's public image and urging him towards greater conformity with that image than divorce or declaration of royal supremacy would allow. J. CHRISTOPHER WARNER is Associate Professor of English at Le Moyne College.

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